

A Memorial to Endorse Restraint

1 WHEREAS there is currently no consensus in this church regarding the rostered service
2 of persons in committed same-gender relationships (Report of the Task Force for ELCA
3 Studies on Sexuality, p.5), and

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5 WHEREAS the ELCA policy documents *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* and
6 *Vision and Expectations: Ordained Ministers in Evangelical Lutheran Church in*
7 *America* are separate from the ELCA Constitution and pertain to rostered service in the
8 ELCA, and

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10 WHEREAS the 2005 ELCA Churchwide Assembly urged every expression of the ELCA
11 to “concentrate on finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements,
12 recognizing the God-given mission and communion that we share as members of the
13 body of Christ” (CA05.05.17, see background information), therefore be it finally

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15 RESOLVED that the 2007 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly memorialize the 2007
16 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to endorse and call for restraint in the application of
17 provisions relating to the rostered service of persons who, in policies separate from the
18 ELCA Constitution, and referred to as “practicing homosexuals” or as “homosexual in
19 their self-understanding.”

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South Minneapolis Conference Assembly, March 22, 2007

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The Reference and Counsel Committee recommends adoption of this resolution.

Background Information

In 2006, the Minneapolis Area Synod (MAS) in Assembly passed a resolution very similar to the “Memorial to Endorse Restraint” presented above. The most important difference with the current memorial is that it addresses the Churchwide Assembly, while the MAS resolution pertains only to the synod. The 2006 synod resolution reads (in part) as follows: “The Minneapolis Area Synod hereby endorses and encourages the exercise of prophetic witness and disciplinary restraint by the MAS Bishop, Synod Council, Candidacy Committee, and any disciplinary committees with responsibilities for the rostered ministries of the MAS (collectively, “MAS Authorities”) in the administration of any policies that impede gay and lesbian persons living in covenanted relationships from full service in rostered ministry.” Also, “it is the guidance of this MAS in Assembly that with respect to the administration of policies which impede the full service in ministry of gay and lesbian persons living in covenanted relationships, the MAS Authorities shall be guided primarily by how the mission and pastoral needs of the MAS and its congregations would best be served.”

An Opinion on the Constitutionality of RC 2007-09 and RC 2007-10

In March 2007 the Reference and Counsel Committee invited the Office of the Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for an opinion on the constitutionality of these two resolutions, anticipating questions that Voting Members of the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly might reasonably ask. The Rev. Ruth Hamilton of the Office of the Secretary responded on March 29, 2007 with the following:

These are two of the three model memorials being distributed by Goodsoil. They were discussed extensively at the March Conference of Bishops meeting. In the opinion of the secretary and general counsel of this church, they can be considered at synod assemblies. The two that you have received, if understood as a sense motion from the assembly only, are in order. Attached is a statement from the Conference of Bishops about this matter.

Message of the Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America March 6, 2007

This pastoral message of the Conference of Bishops is offered as we prepare for upcoming Synod Assemblies and the Churchwide Assembly.

We remind this church that the 2005 Churchwide Assembly resolved that the “members, congregations, synods, churchwide organization, and agencies and institutions [of this church] be urged to concentrate on finding ways to live together faithfully in the midst of disagreements, recognizing the God-given mission and communion that we share as members of the body of Christ” (CA05.05.17).

This church is engaged in a careful study of issues related to human sexuality with the intention of adopting a social statement at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. We urge the members of this church to engage fully and faithfully in the study process as part of our “living together faithfully” during this time.

We trust the Holy Spirit to guide us and have confidence in the constitutional process that orders our conversation as we engage together in moral deliberation at Synod Assemblies and the Churchwide Assembly.

The Conference of Bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America commits itself to faithful leadership as, together, we seek the mind of Christ on these matters.